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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of uniform/dress codes and practices on school climate, educational attainment, and student affective and cognitive domains in Washington (District of Columbia) schools. Information was drawn from surveys of 301 principals and teachers and 268 parents. The following findings are presented: (1) reasons cited for interest in a policy included the need to teach students that clothes do not make a person, financial savings for family, and parent concern that children might participate in an illicit act to purchase designer clothing; (2) elementary schools were more likely than secondary schools to be planning to implement a uniform policy, and senior high schools were more likely than elementary or junior high schools to be planning a dress code policy; (3) parents were usually involved in developing a uniform policy in elementary schools, but not in secondary schools; (4) the average price of a uniform for males in 1991 was $119.57, compared with $113.56 in 1989, and for females was $130.67 in 1991, compared with $108.47 in 1989; (5) there was no significant change in overall attendance or educational attainment after implementing a policy; and (6) parents and school staff believe that wearing uniforms has had a positive impact on school climate. Statistical data are presented in seven tables. A glossary and a list of three references are appended. (FMW)

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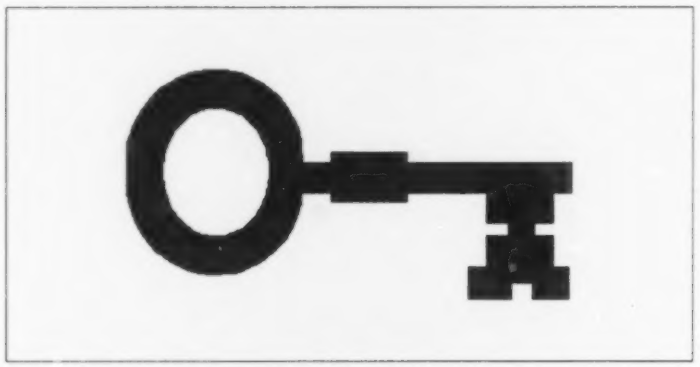
District of Columbia Public Schools

UNIFORM POLICY/DRESS CODES: SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF NEED AND IMPACT



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February 1991

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District of Columbia Public Schools

UNIFORM POLICY/DRESS CODES: SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF NEED AND IMPACT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of uniform/dress code policies and practices as they related to improved school climate or educational attainment, and outcomes in the affective and cognitive domains.

What reasons were cited for interest in uniform policy/dress code:

1. Most often cited by school staff as the reasons for implementing a uniform policy were that such a policy would assist in cutting down on disputes and fights related to clothing and the belief that the practice would assist students in realizing that clothes do not make the person.

2. Parents responding to the Survey of Parents' Views of Uniform Policies or Practices Within the District of Columbia Public Schools indicated that their child's school needed a uniform policy to 1) assist children to learn that clothes do not make the person and 2) because of potential financial savings within the household. Parents also cited the child's concern with designer clothes over obtaining good grades and/or parents' belief that students without designer clothes were ridiculed by their classmates.

3. One hundred parents expressed concern their child might participate in an illicit act in order to purchase designer clothing.

At what grade level was a uniform policy/dress code likely to be implemented:

4. Elementary schools were more likely planning to implement a uniform policy than were secondary level schools. Senior high school respondents were more interested in initiating a dress code policy than were either the junior high or elementary school respondents.

What steps were generally used in assessing the need for and interest in a uniform policy/dress code?

5. Consideration of uniform policy proceeded via the following steps in elementary schools: 1) Parents were surveyed to determine interest in a uniform policy, 2) Principal discussed a uniform policy with the PTA,

and, 3) Results of the Parent Survey were used as an indicator of interest in developing a uniform policy.

6. Some elementary level respondents indicated parents contacted the school to discuss the need for a uniform policy.

7. Secondary school respondents rarely reported using any of those steps/strategies.

How much does a standard uniform cost? How does the cost in 1991 compare with costs from 1989?

8. The average price of a uniform for males in 1991 was $119.57 compared with $113.56 in 1989. The average price of a uniform for females in 1991 was $130.67 compared with $108.47 in 1989.

To what extent did parents participate in developing the uniform policy/dress code in their school? Parents of school children at which level were more likely to participate in a uniform policy/dress code?

9. Forty-seven percent of responding parents participated in the development of the uniform policy in their child's school. Parents of elementary children were more likely to participate in the development of a school's uniform policy than were parents of secondary level students.

What impact has the uniform policy/dress code had on student cognitive and affective behaviors?

10. On the average for SYs 1987-88 and 1989-90, schools in which uniforms were worn maintained a higher average attendance rate than the DCPS average **prior** to and after adopting the practice of wearing uniforms. For schools that initiated wearing uniforms in SY 1988-89, the average attendance rates remained below the system average **prior** to and **after** uniforms were being worn.

11. Analyses of attendance rates with percentage of students wearing uniforms in schools yielded non-significant low

positive correlations of .28 or less for SYs 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

12. Correlations among the percentage of students wearing uniforms and percentage of students promoted were positive but low and non-significant as was the case when percent wearing uniforms was correlated with attendance rates.

13. Principals interviewed during the 1991 Telephone Survey indicated belief that overall behavior and student/staff attitudes have improved since the practice of wearing uniforms has been initiated. Some principals indicated that overall promotion and attendance rates have improved due, in part, to wearing uniforms.

How do principals feel about the prospect of implementing a uniform policy/dress code in DCPS?

14. Most of the 55 principals contacted during the 1991 Telephone Survey favored the establishment of a uniform policy.

13. Parents agreed with the uniform policy because uniforms were more affordable than the clothing generally purchased for their child. Less frequently cited reasons supportive of a uniform policy were belief 1) wearing uniforms has helped more children to focus on learning (80 parents), and 2) uniforms have erased some of their child's feelings of shame and embarrassment.

In conclusion, the development of uniform policies/dress codes was viewed as a strategy for re-focusing student attention to learning. Elementary school staff and parents favored establishment of a uniform policy. Notions of a dress code were viewed more positively at the secondary school level than was a uniform policy. Parental involvement at the local school level was considered critical to the establishment of those policies. Impact of wearing uniforms is inconclusive. Student performance and attendance data have not changed, overall, in a positive direction. School staff and parents believe that the presence of uniforms has positively impacted on schools.

At best, the establishment of a uniform policy/dress code might serve as **one of the factors** that could lead to improved student attendance and achievement. Many variables impact on student achievement: curriculum, instruction, assessment methods

and instruments, parental involvement/support, school climate, etc. At most, uniforms may contribute to a change in student perceptions of each other and the values they hold, elements most likely to impact on school climate. Since uniform policies/dress codes may be one of the factors that ultimately impact on school climate, it will be difficult to establish a direct correlation between what children wear to school and how they perform in school. **Perhaps it is more appropriate for future investigations related to uniform policies/dress codes to focus on changes in student, school staff and parent perceptions of school climate as measures of uniform policy/dress code impact.**

UNIFORM POLICY/DRESS CODES: SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF NEED AND IMPACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of uniform/dress code policies and practices as they related to improved school climate or educational attainment, and outcomes in the affective and cognitive domains. Information was also to be provided on the process used by local schools to activate uniform/dress code policies and practices. District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) definitions for uniform policy and dress codes are included in Appendix A.

Background

In Washington, DC and other jurisdictions (e.g., New Haven, CN; Dade County, FL; Prince George's County, MD; Baltimore, MD; Detroit, MI; and Perth Amboy, NJ) around the United States, the pressure placed on students by their peers to wear expensive, designer clothing has escalated dramatically. Clothes have become the pre-eminent status symbol. So excessive was the concern with clothes, by some students, that their attention had been taken away from learning and the students' overall social development (Leff, 1987). To some students expensive and designer clothing was more important than good grades, success in athletics or other extracurricular activities. Some students turned to illicit means to provide themselves with money for clothes (White, 1988).

Increasing competitiveness in the classroom as well as on school grounds, rejection, and ridicule of less stylish, expensive dress by peers have generated a movement among parents, principals and some school boards to initiate school uniform and/or dress code policies. Research has shown that chronic peer rejection has been linked to childhood depression, low self-esteem, early school-leaving, and delinquent behavior (The Harvard Education Letter, 1989). Therefore, within many inner city schools, parents were interested in uniform policies/dress codes as a means of alleviating expensive clothes competition that had drained family budgets, lowered the self-esteem of students who could not afford the more expensive clothing, encouraged illicit activities and removed attention from the real purpose of school.

Historically, dress regulations were not developed to promote conformity. They were established to teach that clothes do not make the woman or man. Additionally, they were to blur economic differences, thus helping to provide a climate of egalitarianism which was to be instructive for both wealthy and poor children (Yardley, 1987).

Moreover, it was hoped that dress code policies would assist inner city children learn how to dress and to have the demeanor needed to enter and stay in the job market.

This movement expanded across the country to end fashion rivalry, to tighten discipline and to build self-esteem. The hope was to remove pressure to wear expensive clothing and to refocus students on the more important task of learning.

Impressions/Existing Uniform/Dress Code Practices Within the DCPS

In June 1988, staff in the Research and Evaluation Branch, Division of Quality Assurance and Management Planning, surveyed 2,257 students in grades 5 through 11 at 23 schools, on their views of the value of implementing a proposed dress code or uniform policy (District of Columbia Public Schools, 1988). Among the findings were the following:

(1) Students (63%) in grade 5 through 10 agreed that peer-pressure was being put on them based on the type of clothing they wore;

(2) Student respondents (69%) at the surveyed grade levels were opposed to a dress code/uniform policy; and

(3) Student respondents (60%) stated that a dress code/uniform policy would not eliminate competition over clothes.

Preliminary conversations by Research and Evaluation Branch staff during March 1989 with DCPS principals in schools where uniforms were being worn indicated the perception that a uniform policy might impact positively on students' school attendance. Support for a uniform policy by the D.C. Parent-Teacher Congress (which represents all public school PTAs in Washington, D.C.) was unanimously voted during the summer of 1988.

In January 1989, it was estimated that 46 DCPS schools (elementary and junior high) had actually started or were in the planning stages to implement a uniform policy. Uniform policies within DCPS are voluntary. Varying percentages of students in 50 schools identified by the DCPS operating divisions wore uniforms as of February 1991. (See Tables 2 - 4.)

Purpose of Study

During February 1989, the DCPS Superintendent requested the Division of Quality Assurance and Management Planning (presently Office of Educational Accountability and Planning) to conduct a study of current uniform/dress code policies and practices within DCPS. The study was to obtain information from principals and school uniform policy/dress code committee members (composed of

parents and staff) to establish why and how these policies or practices were implemented and their impact on school climate and student progress. Data were collected for the 1989 study but were not analyzed. The 1989 study design was resurrected and updated during January 1991.

Evaluation Questions

1. What are principals', staff and parent members of the uniform/dress code committees views of why these policies or practices were needed in their schools?

2. What were the processes used to set up uniform/dress code policies or practices within the DCPS?

   -- Process used by schools to set up their policies or practices
   -- Selection of uniform companies
   -- Uniform costs and payment methods for poor families

3. Have uniform/dress code policies or practices impacted on attendance in schools having these policies or practices implemented one or more semesters?

4. What are principals', staff and parent committee members' views of the impact of uniform/dress code policies or practices on their school (students, staff and parents)?

Methodology

Principals of all elementary, junior high and senior high schools were mailed surveys during May-June 1989 in order to assess the previously delineated evaluation questions. Additional questionnaires were mailed to uniform policy/dress code committee members (including parent members) during May-June 1989 who were currently implementing a uniform/dress code policy, planning a policy, or leaning toward a policy.

During February 1991, telephone survey data were collected from principals at schools identified by the operating divisions as either having a uniform policy or students wearing uniforms (but without a policy). Telephone survey questions focused on existence of a uniform policy, percentage of students estimated to wear uniforms on a daily basis, the year students began wearing

uniforms and impact on student progress and school climate. School profiles were generated so that student progress data, membership and percentage wearing uniforms could be visually depicted. Telephone calls were made to vendors frequently used by DCPS to secure uniforms to make price comparisons from 1989 to 1991.

Attendance and student progress data of schools implementing these policies for one or more semesters were compared with themselves during previous semesters without uniform/dress code policies or practices to determine what relationships, if any, existed.

Description of the Respondents

School Principals/Teachers/Counselors - 301 teachers/principals responded to the Principal and Staff Survey of Uniform/Dress Code Policies or Practices(1989). Two hundred twenty four respondents were at the elementary level, 63 were junior high level and 14 were senior high level. Of the 301, 177 teachers completed surveys as follows: Pre-K - K, 18; grades 1 - 6, 98; grades 7 - 9; 52; and grades 10 -12, 9.

Parents - 268 parents responded to the Survey of Parents' Views of Uniform Policies or Practices Within the District of Columbia Public Schools(1989). Of 268, 236 were parents of elementary children; 25 were parents of junior high school children and 7 parents of senior high school students.

Principals at 52 schools, identified by operating divisions as sites where uniforms were worn, were contacted as a part of the 1991 Telephone Survey. Of the 52, students in 33 schools wore uniforms, all but one at the elementary school level.

Findings

Results of May-June 1989 surveys of school staff and parents and the February 1991 Telephone Survey of schools, served as data sources for findings. Analyses will be presented using evaluation questions as anchors.

1. What are principals', staff and parent members' of the uniform/dress code committees views of why these policies were needed in their schools?

Respondents were instructed to check all of the item responses that served as the basis for their belief that a uniform policy or dress code was needed. Most often cited by school staff as the reasons for implementing a uniform policy were that such a policy would assist in cutting down on disputes and fights related to clothing (109) and belief by school staff that the practice would assist students in realizing that clothing does not make the person (103).

Statistically significant differences were found by school level in terms of need for a uniform policy based on:

1) student behavior on days when they were dressed up in uniforms,

2) student concern for clothes over good grades,

3) students being ridiculed by classmates,

4) potential for cutting down on disputes/fights related to clothing, and

5) interest in helping students to learn that clothes do not make the person (Chi-squares ranged from 6.33-29.23,df=2,a<.05).

Ninety-seven of the respondents indicated that students without designer clothing were often ridiculed.

Of the 268 parents responding to the Survey of Parents' Views of Uniform Policies or Practices within the District of Columbia Public Schools, most indicated that their child's school needed a uniform policy to 1) assist children to learn that clothes do not make the person (187 of 268), and 2) because of potential financial savings within the household (186). Parents also cited 1) the child's concern with designer clothes over obtaining good grades (196) and/or 2) parents' belief that students without designer clothes were ridiculed by their classmates (152) as concerns. This item indicated the existence of statistically significant differences by level with parents of junior high school students most often citing those responses (76%)(Chi-square=6.18,df=2, a<.0454).

Parents (113 of 268) said their children expressed feelings of shame and embarrassment because they lacked designer/expensive clothing. One hundred parents expressed concern their child might participate in an illicit act in order to purchase designer clothing. Rarely cited was that students were kept home due to a lack of change of clothing (48 of 268) or concern that their children would not attend school due to lack of designer clothing.

2. What were the processes used to set up uniform/ dress code policies or practices within DCPS?

-- Process used by schools to set up their policies or practices
-- Selection of uniform companies
-- Uniform costs and payment methods for poor families

Statistically significant differences existed among school staff in terms of whether a uniform policy was being considered (Chi-square=12.26, df=2, a<.01). Elementary schools were more likely planning to implement a uniform policy than were secondary level schools. More school staff were **not interested** in implementing a uniform policy than were interested in establishing a uniform requirement (Chi-square=7.87,df=2, a<.05). Senior high school respondents were more interested in initiating a dress code policy than were either the junior high or elementary school respondents (Chi-square=11.67,df=2,a<.0029).

Most often, consideration of uniform policy proceeded via the following steps in elementary schools:

1) Parents were surveyed to determine interest in a uniform policy,

2) Principal discussed a uniform policy with the PTA, and,

3) Results of the Parent Survey were used as an indicator of interest in developing a uniform policy.

Though less frequently the case, some elementary level respondents indicated parents contacted the school to discuss the need for a uniform policy. Secondary school respondents rarely reported using any of those steps/strategies.

Most often in elementary schools, a committee composed of parents and school staff developed the schools' uniform policy. In rare instances, principals (according to less than 5% of respondents) or school staff (reported by less than 3% of respondents) developed uniform policies in isolation from parents.

Uniform costs are compared in Table 1. The average price of a uniform for males in 1991 was $119.57 compared with $113.56 in 1989. One outfit for boys, excluding shoes, costs $43.75, on average (SY 1990-91). The average price of a uniform for females in 1991 was $130.67 compared with $108.47 in 1989. One outfit for

girls, excluding shoes, costs $45.50, on average. A variety of uniform companies made presentations to school committees.

Table 1

Comparisons of Uniform Prices Offered by Selected Vendors

Girls		
Vendor	SY 1988-89	SY 1990-91
Metropolitan	$131.75	$126.00
Kid-A-Rama	$105.00@	$135.00@
Top	$ 93.84@	$131.00@
Uniform XChange	$103.30@	N/A
Morton's	N/A	None
P.J. McEvoy	N/A	$ 45.50*
Boys		
Vendor	SY 1988-89	SY 1990-91
Metropolitan	$132.25	$125.75
Kid-A-Rama	$105.00@	$117.50@
Top	$105.17@	$115.47@
Uniform XChange	$111.82@	N/A
Morton's	N/A	$ 48.50*
P.J. McEvoy	N/A	$ 39.00*

@ - Average of highest and lowest package prices
* - Cost of one outfit

Uniform policies were being implemented as early as 1987 according to respondents (6). Most were put into place during 1988 (54 of 60 respondents to this item). Seventy-nine percent (239) of the respondents did not indicate a response to this item.

Dress code policies have been in place for much longer. Dress code policies were reported to exist prior to 1970. Since 1980, 28 respondents (9%) reported that dress codes have been implemented in their schools. Eighty-three percent (250) did not respond to this item.

Fifty respondents indicated a uniform policy was being considered while 26 indicated a dress code policy was being considered. Thirty-six respondents indicated they were not interested in implementing a uniform policy while 24 indicated a lack of interest in implementing a dress code policy.

Forty-seven percent (126 of 268) responding parents participated in the development of the uniform policy in their child's school. Statistically significant differences were found among school levels in terms of participation. Parents of elementary children were more likely to participate in the development of a school's uniform policy than were parents of secondary level students (Chi-square=10.99,df=4,a<.0266).

3. Have uniform/dress code policies or practices impacted on attendance in schools having these policies or practices implemented one semester or more?

The number of 1989 survey responses to this question was too few to generalize the impact of uniform policies/dress codes on student attendance. Tables 2 - 4 provide profiles on selected items for schools in which uniforms are worn.

On the average for SYs 1987-88 and 1989-90, schools in which uniforms were worn maintained a higher average attendance rate than the DCPS average **prior** to and after adopting the practice of wearing uniforms (Tables 2 and 4). For schools that initiated wearing uniforms in 1988-89, the average attendance rates remained below the system average **prior** to and **after** uniforms were being worn.

Analyses of attendance rates with percentage of students wearing uniforms in schools highlighted in Tables 2 - 4 yielded non-significant low positive correlations of .28 or less for SYs 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Table 2

School Data Profile Comparisons Among Schools that Encouraged Wearing Uniforms: 1988

School Name	% Wearing Uniforms	SPP 1987	SPP 1988	SPP 1989	SPP 1990	Attendance Rate 1987	Attendance Rate 1988	Attendance Rate 1989	Attendance Rate 1990	Membership 1990
Beers	95%	97.7	95.9	93.1	92.1	94.0	95.2	94.2	95.5	657
Burrville	100%	96.4	95.9	91.9	90.2	93.0	n/a	96.0	95.0	423
Davis	10%	93.5	94.3	80.8	85.8	95.1	92.8	92.7	92.2	619
Draper	50%	97.7	97.6	96.0	96.7	92.1	92.8	93.1	92.8	540
Green	75%	88.0	83.6	88.0	87.2	95.6	97.0	96.6	96.5	554
Houston	87%	96.9	91.5	94.0	89.9	92.3	92.7	92.5	90.2	348
LaSalle	45%	93.0	98.2	93.5	91.2	94.7	93.9	94.7	94.1	488
Merritt	90%	91.4	85.1	74.1	82.1	89.5	93.4	91.4	93.5	267
Orr	90%	93.8	91.3	85.8	84.3	93.1	94.1	92.5	91.4	588
Randall Highland	70%	89.5	93.4	n/a	84.5	90.6	92.7	94.1	93.1	484
River Terrace	95%	96.4	96.5	91.1	96.3	91.1	92.2	93.0	n/a	257
Rudolph	82%	95.4	92.6	89.8	92.3	97.1	94.7	93.3	92.6	446
Averages (Uniform) (Schools)	76.8	94.3	92.5	88.5	89.2	93.1	93.8	93.6	93.3	
Averages (DCPS) (Overall)		92.7	93.1	89.1	88.7	92.9	93.1	91.8	92.5	N = 12

Table 3

School Data Profile Comparisons Among Schools that Encouraged Wearing Uniforms: 1989

School Name	% Wearing Uniforms	SPP 1988	SPP 1989	SPP 1990	Attendance Rate 1988	Attendance Rate 1989	Attendance Rate 1990	Membership 1990
Brookland	90%	92.7	92.5	89.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	460
Harris	40%	92.4	90.9	89.9	89.3	69.5	91.7	443
Plummer	10%	87.8	85.9	86.6	90.8	89.9	90.0	361
Powell	45%	95.6	93.4	91.6	82.5	92.4	91.5	281
Richardson	25%	95.8	76.1	77.0	92.5	88.7	88.7	345
Simon	80%	93.5	87.1	92.6	90.3	92.1	93.6	420
Smothers	50%	96.4	90.0	86.8	92.6	92.3	92.9	359
Syphax	10%	89.4	88.8	95.3	95.9	90.2	93.3	239
J.O. Wilson	40%	92.9	86.1	88.4	93.3	96.8	95.3	428
Young	50%	88.1	82.0	81.6	90.6	87.9	87.4	447
Averages (Uniform) (Schools)	44%	92.5	87.3	87.9	90.9	88.9	91.6	
Averages (Overall) (DCPS)		93.1	89.1	88.7	93.1	91.8	92.5	

N = 10

Table 4

School Data Profile Comparisons Among Schools that Encouraged Wearing Uniforms: 1990

School Name	% Wearing Uniforms	SPP 1989	SPP 1990	Attendance Rate 1989	Attendance Rate 1990	Membership 1990
Aiton	90%	88.3	90.4	86.8	90.8	476
Barnard	95%	86.9	81.6	96.7	96.3	455
Bowen	50%	92.4	93.5	95.5	96.6	359
Garfield	15%	86.7	84.4	94.3	95.1	452
Keene	95%	87.9	89.2	96.1	94.9	352
Ft. Lincoln	45%	94.6	79.4	N/A	95.4	413
Raymond	12%	88.4	84.3	93.5	93.7	650
Shadd	77%	88.4	87.0	92.7	n/a	568
Shaed	5%	92.4	85.1	90.6	89.6	512
West	43%	93.3	95.3	99.2	97.1	464
Whittier	25%	97.4	94.0	95.4	96.4	576
Averages (Uniform) (Schools)	50.8%	90.2	88.5	94.1	94.5	
Averages (Overall) (DCPS)		89.1	88.7	91.8	92.5	

N = 11

4. What are principals', staff and parent committee members views of the impact of uniform/dress code policies and practices on their school (students, staff and parents)?

1989 Teacher/Principal Survey responses to this item were too few to generalize impact of uniform policy/dress code on student attendance and self-esteem. Correlations among the percentage of students wearing uniforms and percentage of students promoted were positive but low and non-significant as was the case when percent wearing uniforms was correlated with attendance rates. Principals interviewed during the 1991 Telephone Survey indicated belief that overall behavior and student/staff attitudes has improved since the practice of wearing uniforms has been initiated. Some principals indicated that overall promotion and attendance rates have improved due, in part, to wearing uniforms. Most of the 55 principals contacted during the 1991 Telephone Survey favored the establishment of a uniform policy.

One hundred twenty three parents agreed with the uniform policy because uniforms were more affordable than the clothing generally purchased for their child. (See Table 1.) Less frequently cited reasons supportive of a uniform policy were beliefs that:

1) wearing uniforms has helped more children to focus on learning (80 parents), and

2) uniforms have erased some of their child's feelings of shame and embarrassment (63 parents).

Achievement profiles for schools in which uniforms are worn, based on Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) median grade equivalent scores (GE) in reading and mathematics, are provided in Tables 5 through 7. The first column of data in each table reflects median CTBS scores during the year preceding the wearing of uniforms at the set of schools. Expected GE scores during the May norm period are 3.8 and 6.8, respectively, for grades 3 and 6. Tables 5 through 7 indicate inconsistent performance from one year to the next in terms of CTBS scores.

Table 5

School CTBS Profiles: SYs 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90

School Name	CTBS Scores Grade 3				CTBS Scores Grade 6			
	87 R :M	88 R :M	89 R :M	90 R :M	87 R :M	88 R :M	89 R :M	90 R :M
Beers	4.4:4.1	3.9:3.8	3.8:4.2	3.6:3.9	6.1:6.8	5.9:6.1	6.9:7.8	8.1:7.5
Burrvill	4.1:5.9	4.5:4.1	4.2:5.2	4.7:5.3	8.4:8.5	8.0:8.0	8.0:8.3	7.5:8.2
Davis	4.0:3.6	3.4:3.5	3.7:3.7	4.1:3.9	5.2:5.8	5.3:6.3	4.9:6.3	5.5:6.7
Draper	x	3.8:4.4	3.5:3.9	3.7:4.2	8.1:8.0	7.4:7.7	5.6:6.7	5.0:6.3
Green	3.2:3.9	3.1:3.5	3.3:3.8	3.3:3.9	5.4:6.8	5.6:7.6	8.9:7.7	8.2:7.7
Houston	3.4:4.4	3.0:3.8	3.4:3.9	4.3:4.8	5.2:6.9	8.5:7.3	5.9:6.9	9.4:8.2
LaSalle	4.5:4.5	3.8:4.4	4.2:4.8	3.7:4.0	7.9:9.3	8.1:8.2	6.7:7.9	7.5:8.3
Merritt	4.6:4.3	3.6:4.4	3.3:3.8	3.6:3.9	5.8:7.0	7.4:6.9	5.8:6.7	6.8:8.0
Orr	2.9:3.6	4.3:4.4	4.4:4.7	4.2:4.0	6.1:7.1	7.2:7.5	7.6:8.0	8.1:7.5
Randle-H	3.1:3.8	3.9:4.1	3.3:4.2	3.8:4.1	7.2:7.4	6.2:7.3	6.0:7.0	5.9:7.0
River Te	3.4:3.9	4.1:4.5	4.5:4.5	3.7:3.7	6.0:7.5	6.7:6.5	8.2:7.3	9.2:7.6
Rudolph	3.8:4.3	4.5:4.6	4.8:4.3	4.3:4.5	9.2:7.1	6.8:7.2	7.8:7.9	6.9:8.4

Table 6

School CTBS Profiles: SYs 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90

School Name	CTBS Scores Grade 3			CTBS Scores Grade 6		
	88 R :M	89 R :M	90 R :M	88 R :M	89 R :M	90 R :M
Brookld	3.2:3.8	4.1:4.4	3.4:4.1	5.7:7.2	6.2:7.6	5.4:7.4
Harris	4.0:4.1	4.4:4.3	3.8:4.0	7.3:7.8	5.9:7.7	7.2:8.2
Plummer	4.0:4.0	3.4:3.9	4.8:4.6	5.2:7.1	5.8:7.4	5.4:6.6
Richards	2.7:3.4	3.8:3.7	3.5:4.1	5.6:7.0	6.0:7.5	6.2:8.8
Simon	3.7:3.7	4.0:3.7	3.4:3.5	8.2:7.7	6.0:7.5	6.2:7.2
Smothers	3.6:3.9	4.2:4.5	3.8:4.3	8.2:8.0	8.2:8.2	5.8:7.4
Syphax	3.3:4.0	4.9:3.9	3.8:4.1	4.9:5.8	6.1:7.6	5.4:6.1
Wilson,J	3.3:3.9	3.5:4.1	3.5:4.2	5.1:6.5	6.7:7.1	6.7:7.0
Young	3.2:3.6	3.8:3.9	3.6:3.8	5.6:6.7	6.4:7.2	5.7:7.6

Table 7

School CTBS Profiles: SYs 1988-89 and 1989-90

School Name	CTBS Scores Grade 3		CTBS Scores Grade 6	
	89 R :M	90 R :M	89 R :M	90 R :M
Aiton	3.7:4.0	3.8:4.3	8.1:7.3	6.8:7.3
Barnard	3.9:4.5	3.3:4.1	6.4:7.7	7.8:7.6
Bowen	3.1:3.8	3.1:3.8	8.7:8.6	5.7:7.1
Garfield	3.7:3.6	3.3:3.7	5.4:6.3	6.9:7.3
Keene	4.4:4.2	3.7:3.7	7.6:7.5	7.3:7.5
Ft. Lin	3.0:3.8	3.9:4.5	7.3:8.1	7.1:7.2
Raymond	3.8:4.0	4.2:4.7	5.4:7.0	5.0:6.6
Shadd	3.1:3.6	3.2:3.5	6.8:6.7	7.9:6.6
Shaed	3.2:3.6	3.4:3.6	7.2:7.0	6.6:6.9
West	3.8:4.1	4.1:4.0	7.1:6.3	6.9:6.8
Whittier	5.0:5.1	4.2:3.8	7.2:8.3	x x

x - Grade level did not exist

Discussion

Findings from the 1989 Parent and Principal/Teacher Surveys and the 1991 Principals' Telephone Survey are the basis for the conclusions drawn in this section. It is clear that interest in a uniform policy/dress code was based on a desire by school staff and parents to focus student attention on learning as opposed to expensive, designer clothing. Parents believed that uniforms would be less expensive than designer clothes. Both groups indicated a belief that a lack of expensive, designer clothing led to ridicule of students by peers and low self-esteem which could lead to various forms of anti-social or criminal activity. Support for a uniform policy was greatest at the elementary school level. Support for a dress code was more prevalent at the secondary school level.

Local school decisions to implement uniform policy/dress codes were most often a shared decision on the part of the home and the school. Parents were generally surveyed and received proposals for uniform policies through the PTA. In rare instances, school administrators or committees made the decision to institute a uniform policy without parental input. Both school staff and parents supported the notion of a uniform policy as long as the decision was made with parental involvement at the local school.

The cost of uniforms remained fairly constant from SYs 1988-89 to 1990-91 for vendors providing services during those time periods. The average price of a uniform for males in 1990-91 was $119.57 compared with $113.56 in 1988-89 while the average price of a uniform for females in 1990-91 was $130.67 compared with $108.47 in 1988-89.

Though survey respondents from 1989 and 1991 believed that school climate, student attendance and student achievement had improved in part due to the presence of uniforms, a review of individual school profiles for identified schools where students are wearing uniforms did not support those beliefs in most instances. Correlational analyses of group school data also did not support beliefs that the presence of uniforms resulted in improved student progress and attendance.

In conclusion, the development of uniform policies/dress codes was viewed as a strategy for re-focusing student attention to learning. Elementary school staff and parents favored establishment of a uniform policy. Notions of a dress code were viewed more positively at the secondary school level than was a uniform policy. Parental involvement at the local school level was considered critical to the establishment of those policies. Impact of wearing uniforms is inconclusive. Student performance

and attendance data have not changed, overall, in a positive direction. School staff and parents believe that the presence of uniforms has positively impacted on schools.

At best, the establishment of a uniform policy/dress code might serve as one of the factors that could lead to improved student attendance and achievement. Many variables impact on student achievement: curriculum, instruction, assessment methods and instruments, parental involvement/support, school climate, etc. At most, uniforms may contribute to a change in student perceptions of each other and the values they hold, elements most likely to impact on school climate. Since uniform policies/dress codes may be one of the factors that ultimately impact on school climate, it will be difficult to establish a direct correlation between what children wear to school and how they perform in school. Perhaps it is more appropriate for future investigations related to uniform policies/dress codes to focus on changes in student, school staff and parent perceptions of school climate as measures of policy impact.

Appendix A

[DCPS Definitions of Uniform Policy/Dress Codes]

To ALL PRINCIPALS

Date APRIL 27, 1989

Subject STUDY OF UNIFORM/DRESS CODE POLICIES OR PRACTICES WITHIN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS)

Originating Office DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PLANNING

District of Columbia Public Schools

Memorandum

Rec'd 5-5-89

The Division of Educational Accountability and Planning has been given the responsibility of conducting a study of Uniform/Dress Code Policies or Practices within the DCPS. Your participation is needed in this study.

Uniform Policy or Practice refers to an agreement between the school and parents concerning the voluntary (non-mandatory) wearing of school uniforms of the same color and style by students. Dress Code Policy or Practice refers to dress and grooming guidelines, standards or regulations delineated by a particular school.

The enclosed surveys are to be completed by principals, staff and parents who participated in the planning or implementation of your Uniform/Dress Code Policies or Practices.

Please distribute the surveys immediately and return them in the enclosed envelopes, on or before May 5, 1989, to Dr. Eva Chunn (telephone 724-4428), of the Division of Educational Accountability and Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch, Payne Elementary School.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation.

Andrew E. Jenkins III

Andrew E. Jenkins III
Superintendent of Schools
Chief State School Officer

Enclosure

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